



**WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF
CONNECTICUT PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION
REGARDING H.B. 6600**

AN ACT CONCERNING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SUSTINET PLAN

**Public Health, Insurance and Real Estate, and Human Services Committees
March 2, 2009**

The Connecticut Public Health Association (CPHA) thanks the Public Health, Insurance and Real Estate, and Human Services Committees for the opportunity today to support universal health care. CPHA is a non-profit, non-partisan organization that provides leadership for the promotion of the public's health among the people of Connecticut. CPHA supports the adoption and implementation of H.B. 6600, An Act Concerning the Establishment of the Sustinet Plan, to ensure improved health for all Connecticut residents. Given the current economic climate, jeopardizing the affordability of and accessibility to health insurance for everyone, there is no better time to establish universal health care.

The United States is the only industrialized nation that does not have some form of universal healthcare system.¹ Despite having the best training, healthcare providers, and medical infrastructure of any industrialized nation, the United States' healthcare system ranks poorly relative to other industrialized nations. The World Health Organization ranked the performance of the U.S.'s healthcare system 37th in the world.² Administrative costs are 50-100% more in the United States than in countries with a single-payer system.³ Connecticut alone spends \$22 billion every year on healthcare.⁴ Despite the system's high cost, there are over 45 million Americans that do not have health insurance and millions more that are underinsured and do not have adequate financial protection for healthcare costs.¹ Lack of adequate and affordable healthcare is a serious problem that affects the health and well-being of all U.S. citizens.

Uninsured individuals have less access to quality healthcare. The uninsured are less likely to be able to fill prescriptions and more likely to pay much more of their money out-of-pocket for prescriptions. Studies show that the uninsured are three to four times more likely than those with insurance to report problems getting needed medical care, even for serious conditions.⁵ The uninsured are also less likely to have a regular source of healthcare; 40% of the uninsured do not have a regular place to go when they get sick, compared to 10% of insured individuals. As a result, 20% of uninsured say their usual source of care is the emergency room, compared to 3% of insured individuals.¹

Inadequate and delayed access to care adversely affects health. Uninsured individuals are less likely to get needed preventive care. Uninsured, non-elderly adults are 50% less likely to receive preventive care, including pap smears, mammograms, blood pressure checks, sigmoidoscopies, cholesterol screening and prostate exams. They are also more likely to receive poor care for chronic diseases, leading to an increased risk of hospitalization and disability.² Individuals who delay medical services get diagnosed later, negatively affecting disease prognosis. The Institute of Medicine estimates that the uninsured have an excess annual mortality rate of 25%, which translates into 18,000 excess deaths per year for people between the ages of 25-64.⁶

The costs of not achieving universal healthcare are high. The annual cost of diminished health and shorter life spans for uninsured Americans is \$65-130 billion.⁷ Uninsured children are more likely to suffer delays in development due to poor health. In addition, inadequate access to healthcare for children contributes to poor health later on in life, less productivity, and a greater burden to society.¹ Insured individuals are also adversely affected by high rates of uninsured persons. An estimated \$43 billion was spent on uncompensated medical care for the uninsured in 2005.⁸ In addition, people living in communities with a higher than average uninsured rates are at risk for reduced availability of healthcare services and overtaxed public health resources.⁶

SustiNet, a universal healthcare plan for Connecticut, would create a comprehensive, high quality and affordable healthcare system that would be available to all Connecticut residents. This plan would do a great deal to ensure universal, continuous access to quality healthcare services in a sustainable way. It will also save money by encouraging preventive healthcare and early interventions in medical illnesses.

The Connecticut Public Health Association wishes to thank the respective Committees before us for the opportunity to address this important public health issue. CPHA urges favorable legislative action on H.B. 6600. For additional information on CPHA's position on universal healthcare and other public health issues, contact CPHA's Advocacy Committee co-chairs Annamarie Beaulieu at annamarie.beaulieu@cpha.info or 860.301.8857, or Alyssa Norwood at alyssa.norwood@gmail.com or 860.424.1345.

¹ Ruth, Erin. "Undercoverage: The Uninsured and Undercovered Medical Services." American Medical Student Association. Available <http://www.amsa.org/uhc/AMSAUninsuredPrimer.pdf>

² World Health Organization. "The WHO's ranking of the world's health systems." 2000 Available <http://www.photius.com/rankings/healthranks.html>

³ Connecticut Coalition for Universal Health Care. Available <http://cthealth.server101.com/index.html>

⁴ Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut. "The Issue." Available http://www.healthcare4every1.org/site/PageServer?pagename=learn_theissue

⁵ Institute of Medicine (IOM). "Care without Coverage: Too Little, Too Late." 5/2002. Available http://books.nap.edu/html/care_without/reportbrief.pdf

⁶ Institute of Medicine (IOM). "Insuring America's Health: Principles and Recommendations. 2004. Washington, DC: National Academy Press. Available <http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?isbn=0309091055>

⁷ Institute of Medicine (IOM). "Hidden Costs, Value Lost." 2003. Washington, DC: National Academy Press. Available <http://search.nap.edu/openbook.php?isbn=030908931X>

⁸ Families USA. "Paying a Premium: The Added Cost of Care for the Uninsured." June 2005. Available http://www.pnhp.org/news/2005/june/the_uninsured_drive.php